



City of Burbank
Planning and Transportation Division
Single Family Residential Instructions
VIEW STUDY GUIDELINES

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Certain single family house projects in the hillside area may be required to apply for a hillside development permit. One of the findings required for approval of a hillside development permit is that the proposed house would not unnecessarily or unreasonably encroach upon scenic views from neighboring properties. To assist the Community Development Director in making this determination, all hillside development permit applicants are required to submit a “view study” as part of their application package. A view study is not likely something that a homeowner will be able to do on their own. Project applicants should discuss the view study with their architect to seek professional assistance in preparing the study.

Generally, a view study can be any combination of materials and exhibits that demonstrate how a proposed house and/or accessory structure would obstruct, or not obstruct, views from surrounding properties. First, the study should document through photographs the existing views from all surrounding properties. The study should then show how the proposed structures would interact with these views. This can be accomplished by any or all of the following methods, or by any other method approved by the Community Development Director:

- Photo simulations: The initial photographs that were used to establish the views from neighboring properties can be modified by drawing the proposed house into the photos. It is very important that the house be drawn to the same scale as the photograph so as to accurately show how the house would affect the views.
- Story poles: This involves erecting poles on the project site to represent the footprint and height of the proposed house. Photographs are then taken of the views from neighboring properties with the poles in place.
- 3D drawings: The initial photographs showing the viewshed can be recreated in a drawing environment, and a 3D representation of the house can be added to the drawing, similar to the photo simulation approach.
- Topographic maps: In certain situations, the elevation difference from one property to another may be so great that there is no possibility that the proposed house would affect certain views. A topographic map can be used to visually represent the elevation difference from one property to the next in relation to the height of the proposed house. Note that this approach by itself would not be an adequate substitution to the above approaches in most situations.

Whichever methods are used, the view study must include a site plan view or aerial photograph showing the project site and all surrounding parcels. The plan or photo must include a key that identifies the location and direction of each of the views from neighboring properties identified in the photographs and drawings. Photographs and drawings should be numbered or otherwise keyed to the locations shown on the map.

The view study should not be limited to only those parcels that are abutting or adjacent to the project site. In some cases, a house may impact the views from homes further up the hillside, depending upon the surrounding terrain. Further, all possible views from the interior and exterior of surrounding homes must be considered, including but not limited to those from windows, decks, and yard areas.

The City recognizes that each hillside property is unique. Different types and scopes of view studies may be appropriate for different projects depending upon the location, configuration, and topography of the project site and surrounding lots and houses. Project applicants or their representatives should discuss their specific situation with Planning Division staff to determine the appropriate scope of their view study.